

FY05 budget: enrollment and the ninth school!

FY05 Budget, from page 1

with grades 1-4, grades 5-6 at Sherwood Middle, grades 7-8 at Oak Middle, and grades 9-12 at the high school).

Resources requested by the school department to open the Oak Middle School total approximately \$1.2 million. This includes 23 staff (core teachers and specialists, support staff, and administration). In terms of its overall impact on the budget, the Oak Middle School will account for 4.8% of the total 13.8%. Clearly, the new school is the highest profile of the \$38.7 million request.

The “good news” for all those in the school community is that we will emerge in the 2004-2005 school year with facilities that will be less crowded and more able to meet the continuing demands for high standards set by both Shrewsbury and the federal government (No Child Left Behind). We will have class sizes more in line with school committee guidelines, better spaces for special education, art, and music, and a high school with the grades 9-12 program for which it was designed.

The weeks and months ahead will be important as more information about state aid to education and the capacity of local revenues become known. The administration’s budget request to the school committee has been crafted to reflect the priorities mentioned above and is admittedly a large increase over the current school year. The essential questions of the community’s priorities and how much the community can support its schools must be addressed. Shrewsbury schools have been supported by this community over time, but our per pupil expenditures remain well below the state average. The administration looks forward to serving as a resource for information and cooperation in the important deliberations leading up to the May town meeting.

As always, please do not hesitate to share your thoughts and concerns. I can be reached at abent@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us.

Shrewsbury School

Journal

Communications Committee

The non-profit *Shrewsbury School Journal* is published three times a year and reaches every household in the diverse and growing town of Shrewsbury. It is published by the central office of the Shrewsbury Public Schools with the help and expertise of many individuals. The mission of the *Shrewsbury School Journal* is to provide an accurate source of information about our school system and the town in which we live. We hope to foster a community of continuous learners.

Anthony J. Bent

Superintendent

Judith Evans

Assistant Superintendent

Dawna Alphonse

Project Coordinator

Enrollment drives FY05 budget

Growth, from page 1

required for re-opening the Oak Middle School.

Another compulsory expense and "cost driver" for the School Department budget is out-of-district tuition. High school students may opt for a vocational education at the Assabet Valley Regional Vocational High School. Next year we are projecting 91 students will attend at a cost of \$11,000 per student, or just

over \$1M in total.

In addition, we are projecting \$1.9M in tuition for special-needs placements in private schools and collaborative programs. On average, tuition is \$42,629 per student, not including transportation. We expect transportation will cost \$432,000 for these students in FY05.

We are a staff-intensive organization and as a result the vast majority of resources go towards salaries and wages for the employees.

School Year	Enrollment
94-95	3,764
95-96	3,880
96-97	4,040
97-98	4,172
98-99	4,381
99-00	4,512
00-01	4,798
01-02	5,077
02-03	5,318
03-04	5,564

Next Steps

In this era of accountability and requirement to demonstrate annual district improvement in providing services to a varied student constituency, it is imperative that the administration develop a budget that meets the needs of all students. The importance of good class sizes, especially in a district that values heterogeneous grouping, cannot be overstated.

We strive to provide an excellent education to all students. The current FY05 budget plan supports this goal in concept and practice. We hope that that the community at-large, via support from elected boards and the town meeting representatives, will support this budget and the re-opening of the Oak Middle School.

Please stay close to the ongoing budget discussions in the coming months at all upcoming school committee meetings.

The FY05 budget documents can be viewed a number of ways. Many of the documents are located on the School Department webpage: www.shrewsbury-ma.gov/schools. You can also view a complete copy of the proposal at the town library or lobby of the School Department Central Office located at town hall.

Enrollment growth continues

ALDEN HARRIS, III

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Whether you have lived in town all of your life or not, the school enrollment trends are not the first place you would look to see that Shrewsbury has grown. Our expansion is evident in the vast number of new neighborhoods, the commercial development along Route 9, and the new commuter train stations along our fringes. Regardless of our different individual feelings about the growth, it is hard to argue that it has happened. For our schools, this growth has resulted in the need to build the Floral Street Elementary School, a new high school and the Parker Road Pre School expansion.

Completing and opening the renovated former high school (soon to be the Oak Middle School) will finally allow our buildings to operate near or within their design capacities for the first time in recent history. Luckily, our town has been very supportive and proactive, acting before the window closed for state-reimbursed school construction. Many towns with serious building needs may not be partially reimbursed by the state for a decade unless there is a change in legislation or funding. While we still need to renovate the old middle school at some point (soon to be the Sherwood Middle School), we have kept pace with the enrollment growth to date. We will also have good capacity to accommodate growth in the next decade absent significant new residential development.

cated allied arts space like art and music rooms. The cafeteria size limitations continue to cause lunches to occur as early at 10:30 a.m.

At the pre-kindergarten level, our Parker Road expansion of 100 students over the same 13 years has allowed the district to provide inclusive early educational development in a full-sized class setting with a mix of fee-based students. It appears that this type of effort to integrate special needs in district is not only a great way to influence the program quality but it will be encouraged under newly developed state funding criteria.

Over the last decade, the growth was projected relatively accurately in advance. The enrollment needs are based on the town manager’s annual enrollment projection. Because construction, planning and community support all start five to eight years before a building is ready for students, this accuracy is crucial. The enrollment projections are based on factors in birth rates in town and how they translate to class size over a five-year average. In 2004, the one-year esti-

mate from last year was within twenty students.

The Future

Based on our projections, enrollment will continue to grow without any further residential development in town. As seen in the chart above, we continue to replace graduating classes of 300 with first grade classes of nearly 500 students. With no change in birth rates or significant new development, we should naturally approach the 6,300 student level late this decade. We are well suited to accommodate this level of natural growth without significant redistricting or new school construction aside from the possibility of the Sherwood Middle School renovation/addition.

Will Shrewsbury grow faster? Will many new residential developments not yet even on the drawing board require more facility expansion? We do not know. However, the process to regularly assess the need well in advance has been demonstrated.

Grade	Class size
12	289
11	324
10	343
9	358
8	437
7	438
6	436
5	494
4	464
3	480
2	464
1	484